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Belfast hair salon customers at risk of injury

Ninety per cent of hair salons in Belfast are failing to protect customers from potential allergic reactions to hair dye, according to a survey by safety campaigners.

Not-for-profit group APIL (Association of Personal Injury Lawyers) says only one in ten salons in Belfast carry out skin allergy tests recommended by hair dye manufacturers prior to a colour treatment.

Lois Sullivan, APIL Northern Ireland secretary, said: "A good hairdresser will be in the habit of insisting on a skin test, and customers should insist on one if they are not offered.

"We know there are some excellent and responsible hairdressers in Belfast, but to learn that 90 per cent of salons surveyed in the city don't carry out this basic good practice is very worrying."

For the test, a small amount of dye is applied to the customer's skin, usually in the crook of their arm, or behind their ear. Most hair dye manufacturers recommend doing this 24 to 48 hours before the hair colour appointment. APIL approached randomly selected salons across Belfast, under the premise of booking an appointment for a permanent colour treatment.

Lois added: "It might be inconvenient to have a skin test but those people, both women and men, who have taken the risk and suffered painful reactions will say that it's worth doing.

"APIL has seen first hand the burns, blisters, baldness, extreme swelling and even temporary blindness. No-one should underestimate how such an injury can affect a person's life. Obviously someone visits a salon because they want to look good. When it goes wrong and they experience pain and often no longer look like themselves, it can go as far as having an affect on them psychologically, causing anxiety and depression.

"The majority of these injuries could easily be avoided if the correct procedures are followed."



Notes to editors:

- The salon survey has previously been carried out in other major UK cities. By way of background, 85 per cent of salons in London and 90 per cent in Edinburgh did not require a skin allergy test.
- For more information, please contact Jane Hartwell, assistant press and communications officer on 0115 938 8072, or email jane.hartwell@apil.org.uk.
- APIL (Association of Personal Injury Lawyers) is a not-for-profit organisation whose members are dedicated to campaigning for improvements in the law to help people who are injured or become ill through no fault of their own. APIL also provides an industry recognised kitemark to lawyers who reach a required standard of competence and specialist expertise in personal injury law.
- Visit APIL's website at www.apil.org.uk.